WALKER
LEE & SHIRLEY

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Interview with Lee and Shirley Walke
by Jim Nagy
2003 - WSCHS History Day

Jim: Now the old hospital, I want to get this straight, I always knew it as the Robinson house,

Lee: Oh, OK

Jim: An Colombo owned it before that. So I'm talking about in the 30's not before that.

Lee: I'm talking in the 1800s.

Jim: Do you recall when that house was built?

Lee: I have no idea, never heard, but that whole area there was the Walker area because like Eleanor street and Fannin street are family names. My middle name is Fannin. And Eleanor was my aunt and then the Walker extension

Jim: Off Walker Avenue?

Lee: Right,

Jim: Now Walker Avenue had another name I understand. back the turn of the century, did you ever hear of that?

Lee: No That was the headquarters but they owned 7 to 8,000 acres to Santa Rosa.

Jim: The Walker family?

Lee: yes, the family, that was Joel and John.

Shirley: They purchased it from Carillo. Lee: 50 cents an acre.

Jim: When was this? 1850 something.

Lee: Yeah it had to be around 1850

Jim: Shirley, there was you and your sister, Gloria and your Dad and Mother's name?

Shirley: Vern and Hazel (Cheney)

Jim: And your mother's maiden name?

Shirley: Crane (spelling?) But she was related to the Underhills. Santa Rosa family.

Jim: And Lee your father's name was?

Lee: Lee Fannin Walker. I'm a junior and our boy's the third.

Jim: How about your grandfather's name?

Lee: Edward There's Edward, his father John and his father, Joel the furthest back.

Jim: Where did they come from?

Lee: They came I believe from Missouri. They kind of traveled those southern states, Kentucky and worked their way west. In fact he was sheriff in Missouri before they came out here, but Joel and his brother Joseph who is a famous mountain man who discovered Yosemite Valley were both mountain men and guides for wagon trains and coming west. But Joel was a family man and Joseph so I read in the history books had an Indian wife and some children and they were killed somehow and he never had any more family.

Jim: Well after your family dates back to the Donner party? (I think that is what Jim said)

Lee: In fact they talked to the Donner party on their way out and advised them not to do what they did. That's what's in the book, I always read in the history.

Jim: What did your dad do here.

Lee: He was a farmer and did various things. At that time it was right in the middle of the Depression in the 30s. And he worked for the CCC and I think he worked in Yosemite Valley, went to Stanford. Was in WWI, died in 1945, was 45 years old when he died.

Jim: You have brothers?

Lee: I have a brother Bob

Jim: Shirley, Your dad was in the grocery business that I know, anything else he worked at?

Shirley, Uh huh, He worked at Garrett Hardware when he was in Healdsburg.

Jim: Which is still there.

Shirley, Uh Huh, he used to talk about putting the old radios, they used to have antennas, and Dad would put up antennas up and work in the store before he came to Sebastopol. I believe he still worked up there for awhile when ... They were married in Healdsburg.

Jim: Were Gloria and you born there?

Shirley: Gloria was born in Healdsburg but I was born in Sebastopol.

Lee: On Wilton Avenue, right?

Jim: In the house.

Lee/Shirley: In the house. In Ida Hunt's house.

Jim: Jag Alley.

Shirley: that's the only thing I know it by.

Jim; then your Dad went into the grocery business in Sebastopol.?

Shirley: He came down and worked at Purity then he went to work for Mr. Fleming on Main Street for many years. He was head of the grocery part. Bill Lawrence was there, his son was a police officer.

Jim: (to Lee) Before your dad what did your grandfather do?

Lee: He died very young too. I think they were all in agriculture.

Jim: (to Shirley) Your mother was a homemaker?

Shirley: She worked for the telephone when they first came from Healdsburg. and then she used to commute back and forth in her Model A.

Jim: Was that the telephone company office here?

Lee: My mother ran the ranches when my dad passed away.

Jim: Now you're older than Bob Walker.

Lee: Two years and two weeks.

Jim: And Shirley you are younger than Gloria?

Shirley: Yes

Jim: And Bob and Gloria are still living?

Shirley: yes.

Jim: And you have children.

Shirley: We have three.

Jim: And grandchildren

Shirley. 3 and no greats yet, we just got one engaged, give him time.

Jim: Shirley you were born when, do you want to tell your age?

Shirley, 1930

Lee: 1931

Jim: What school did you go to?

Lee: Vine Hill, two room school. 3 of us graduated there, 8th grade. Vine Hill school on Vine Hill School Road.

Shirley: went to school in town.

Shirley: When I started grammar school we lived on Wilton then we moved to South Main St. Till I was married.

Jim: They must have lived there a good many years?

Shirley: Oh yeah.

Jim: Were you born in a house too? (To Lee)

Lee: No I was actually born in San Francisco, and I don't know how come. Cause we were all from all up here but I was born in Children's hospital in SF.

Jim: How about your brother Bob?

Lee: I don't know I think he was born in Santa Rosa.

Jim: Your home was where.

Lee: Just at the end of Vine Hill School road on the west end. Half a mile from school. Bicycles and walk

Jim: Do you recall the teacher there?

Lee: Miss Fondine (spelling?)

Jim: How many kids did you have in school.

Lee: We had two teachers in the school

Jim: K through 8?

Lee: No, 1st through 8. I attended a Todd school one year, my grandmother was principal of Todd School. For some reason I went to Todd School for a year.

Jim: You probably stayed with her during the school year.

Lee: We were only 3 or 4 miles apart.

Jim: (to Shirley) and you went to school at Sebastopol Grammar?

Shirley: Yeah it was Sebastopol grammar.

Jim: Did you have chance to go to the old school? The old wooden one.

Shirley: Oh yeah, we went up all those stairs.

Jim: That was the one that had the gym?

Shirley: On the lower level.

Jim: Went to Analy. Do you remember your first teacher?

SW: Jane Corn (spelling?)

Jim: So of course you walked to school? What do you recall from your school days? Any favorite teachers?

Shirley: Yeah, Miss Davies in first grade and I thought she was wonderful and later, Pat Sherborn, Mr. Hole. Miss Ferguson, George Losey was

principal.

Jim: Any recollections about Vine Hill?

Lee: We did not have many kids there, it was great. Miss Fondine was just a good lady, really nice and in upper grades I had Miss Lillian Sloat she was tremendous. Were were fortunate we had some nice teachers.

Jim: You went to a larger school than Lee did.
Any friends from grammar school?

Lee: Oh yeah we were close with Carl Oehlmann, Gladys Bledsoe, those are the two we see the most.

Shirley: there were so many, when we were still on Wilton Avenue, one of my best friends was Shirley Whitesell and she lived directly in back of us on Bodega Ave then she moved. They went to Oregon and when we moved to So. Main, Carol Tibbits lived just up the street and she was a good friend. And I went to school with Marianne Munsford and Jeri O'Leary Daveiro and Beth Clark, Barbara Wright. Evelyn Williams. I could go on..

Jim: When you were growing up it was the Depression. Did you work in the 30s'.

Shirley: Not during the 30's I was too young. I picked berries for Mr. Elphick on Elphick Road and cut pears for Hallbergs and worked in Colettis apple packing. One summer Jerry (spelling?) O'Leary and Coletti (spelling?) Wetch picked up apples at Hubert Scudder's home and he was our representative for a long time.

Lee: Like Shirley in the 30s we were a little young to do much but I remember the first part oft he 40s during the war my dad worked in the shipyard. So he'd work the graveyard shift at Kaiser by Napa and so he worked the swing shift he have to leave the middle of the afternoon so everybody had a cow for milk. Once in a while we'd have to milk the cow. I remember my brother'd get on one side and I'd get on the other and the cow would take that so long and would kick the bucket over and that was usually the end of our milking. That's the kind of things we had to do then.

Jim: when you started high school (too much noise)

Shirley: I was secretary of my class once and I can't remember what else I did.

Jim: But you enjoyed high school?

Shirley: Yeah

Jim: Any special teachers in high school?

Shirley: No one stands out as special I just had some nice ones. I didn't end up in the office too often. Principal was Mr. Oberman

Lee: My first year was Mr. Oberman than Mr. Duffield after that. When I started high school I was really a country boy we were really country. Like we had never even seen a basketball we didn't know what a basketball was until we got to high school. Sports became a big passion in high school and really enjoyed it. Played basketball, football, baseball then I was student body president in high school. my senior year.

Jim: tell me about your baseball activity.

Lee: Guess that was my big passion, played baseball in college and in the service. Went to the JC for college, had best coach there, (Cipher spelling) Played all army, was in service two years. At the end of the Korean conflict, in missiles. I had a chance to sign professional out of junior college and then we were scouted in the army and we had a chance to sign with the Red Socks or go with Seattle in the coast league. So Shirley and I had just come from Texas we'd been travelling with two kids for two years in the army so I wanted to stay on the west coast so we signed with Seattle. From there my curve ball wasn't good enough so I didn't stay there, went to Salem, Oregon and we played there. Then I played ball locally for twenty years. When I with Seattle Larry Jensen was the pitching coach and was player coach and so he became pitching coach for the Giants and so I knew him and he talked to me and we used to go down and pitch batting practice for the Giants.

Jim: Your dad had a store here?

Shirley: On South Main Street (Cheney's grocery) My sister worked in it more than I did, I wasn't real fond of working in the store but I'd go down and stock shelves and do things like that and every New Year's Day we took inventory that was our NewYears celebration.

Lee: Shirley was an usher at the El Rey theater.

Shirley:Oh I forgot about that. What year did they open the Analy, 1949..No we weren't married then. Graduated in 1949.

Jim thanks them etc.